

US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY



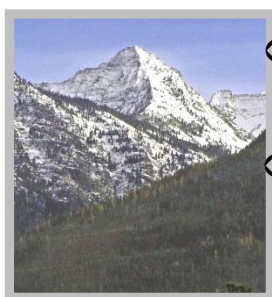
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date: **6:00 AM, Friday, February 17, 2012**
Valid Until: **Midnight, Friday, February 17, 2012**
Next Update: **Tuesday, February 21, 2012**
Issued by: **Stan Bones**

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

All Mountain Ranges



7,500 ft. elevation



5,500 ft.



Avalanche Danger Summary	
2 - Moderate	5,500 to 7,500 ft. elevation on steep, open terrain
1 - Low	below 5,500

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - 5,500 to 7,500 ft. elevation

Danger Level	2 - MODERATE
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies Evaluate snow and terrain carefully
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural avalanche unlikely Human triggered avalanches possible
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small avalanches in specific areas or Larger avalanches in isolated areas Concern is steep, open slopes and gullies lacking vegetative and terrain anchors, particularly slopes with a relatively thin snow cover and a basal layer of weakly bonded, eroding, faceted grains Concern also with unstable near surface snow poorly bonded to buried surface hoar or layers of melt-freeze ice

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - below 5,500 ft. elevation

Danger Level	1 - LOW
Confidence	Good
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally safe avalanche conditions exist Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both natural and human triggered avalanche unlikely
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very small avalanches in widespread areas or Small avalanche in isolated areas

Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.

Recent Mountain Weather

<u>Summary</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general lull in mountain weather conditions
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light snow almost daily over the mtns., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Heaviest in Mission, Swan, Flathead, Livingston, and Lewis Ranges on the Flathead • 1.1- Inches total of snow water equivalent over the 5-day period, Sunday to Thursday ◦ Kootenai mtns saw generally only trace amounts
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperatures mostly mild • <u>Sunday and Monday</u> Mountain average daily temps in the high 20's°F • <u>Tuesday to Thursday</u> Mountain average daily temps cooled to the low 20's°F
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winds have generally been light to absent

Field Observation Locations

Thursday, 2-16-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caribou Saddle, Purcell Range, N of Libby • Diamond Peak area, Whitefish Range, N of Whitefish • Noisy Basin, N Swan Range, NE of Bigfork
Tuesday, 2-14-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snowslip area of John Stevens Canyon, S'ern edge of Glacier Park, Hwy 2, west of Marias Pass

Observer Report Locations

	None received
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<u>Avalanches Observed</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small, isolated loose snow slides and roller/sun balls at low and mid elevations
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Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern	Most★★★ Less★★ Least ★		
New Storm or Near Surface Snow	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N'erly & E'erly Aspects New snowfall has increased the loading upon the surface hoar layer developed during cold clear nights 10 days ago S'erly & W'erly Aspects New snow deposited upon melt-freeze ice crusts and layers formed during times of solar warming Shear tests are reactive on or beneath each of these layers 		
Wind Loading	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent winds have generally been calm to light with wind transport minimal Be alert if winds do increase, for wind slabs forming upon the weak surface hoar layer currently shallowly buried 		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern with the buried surface hoar and melt-freeze ice crusts and layers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These continue to fail with little to moderate force in shear tests Concern also remains with basal depth hoar found beneath shallow snow covers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Found along the East Front and near the Continental Divide Also found further west on wind scoured slopes and areas like Jewel Basin where overall snowfall has been below normal 		
Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable currently with reestablished cloud cover Can occur rapidly however with even short clearing following a new snowfall 		
Rain-on-Snow		Not applicable		
Loose Snow	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild temperatures generally promoting surface snow consolidation 		
Other Concerns				

Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate Pacific weather system forecasted to impact the region beginning Friday night and through the weekend
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friday through Sunday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light to moderate new accumulations of snow are expected 1-4-inches of new depth each day Heaviest snowfall on Saturday
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daytime temps remaining mild in the high 20's to mid 30's° F Nighttime lows 15-25 ° F throughout the period
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light and variable

Avalanche Outlook

Trend	•Through the weekend we expect the avalanche danger to gradually increase with the new snowfall
Concern	• Be particularly alert to new snow loading either from precipitation or wind upon the existing buried weak surface hoar and melt-freeze ice layers
Comment	• <i>Always carry and know how to use avalanche safety equipment</i> • <i>Watch for a possible rapid change in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts</i> • <i>Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on</i>